### Opinions on Trump’s Speech

#### Trump’s speech was terrible — his message is too negative to win.

Begala 16 — Paul Begala, Democratic Strategist and Political Commentator at CNN, former Co-Host of *Crossfire*—the TV show that inspired the creation of public forum debate, served in the Bill Clinton campaign and as Counsel to the President during the Clinton Administration, former Research Professor of Government and Public Policy and current Affiliated Professor of Public Policy at the Public Policy Institute at Georgetown University, former Carl E. Sanders Political Leadership Scholar at the University of Georgia School of Law, holds a J.D. from the University of Texas-Austin, 2016 (“Trump's midnight in America,” *CNN*, July 22nd, Available Online at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/22/opinions/trumps-midnight-in-america-begala/>, Accessed 07-22-2016)

There were two enormous problems with Donald Trump's speech at the Republican National Convention: too much darkness, not enough inspirational personal biography.

First, the tone. If Trump needs a theme song he should consider the opening line of Simon & Garfunkel's "Sounds of Silence": "Hello darkness my old friend." This was one of the darkest speeches I have ever heard from a major party candidate. It's midnight in America.

Trump is blessed with truly impressive children and a gifted wife; they were the highlight of the convention. Indeed, the only person named Trump who gave a lousy speech was The Donald. He failed to build on their strong performances.

Donald Trump's America is fearful. Afraid of crime, afraid of terrorism, afraid of immigrants. His America is angry. Angry about political correctness. Angry about international trade. Angry with President Obama. And very, very angry about Hillary Clinton's candidacy.

Speaker after speaker at this convention excoriated Clinton. That's standard political fare. But Dr. Ben Carson compared her to Lucifer. Gov. Chris Christie called for her imprisonment. And one informal Trump adviser called for Clinton to be shot for treason. (The Secret Service is investigating that one.)

"Fear and loathing on the Campaign Trail" was a great book by the late Hunter S. Thompson, but it's a lousy campaign strategy. Americans want lift and loft, especially when they are anxious. In the depth of the Depression, FDR won with the song "Happy Days Are Here Again." Ronald Reagan, running in a recession, was a sunny optimist.

In another recession, my old boss Bill Clinton told his convention, "I still believe in a place called Hope." And with a crumbling economy and two mismanaged wars, Barack Obama had "the audacity of hope."

Optimism is central to the American character. A focus on the future, and an endless faith that we can make tomorrow better than today -- these are at the heart of the American dream.

Trump should have read Ronald Reagan's 1980 convention address. Like all challengers, he hammered the incumbent. But unlike Donald Trump he spoke of a bold, optimistic country. In fact, Reagan's words that night in Detroit 36 years ago were a cautionary note about dark demagogues like Donald Trump:

"The American people, the most generous on Earth, who created the highest standard of living, are not going to accept the notion that we can only make a better world for others by moving backwards ourselves. Those who believe we can have no business leading the nation."

Donald Trump wants to move America backwards, but he couldn't even move his party to unite behind him. He misreads the American character if he thinks darkness and division are winning political themes.

Which leads me to the second major failing of Trump's speech: The absence of a personal narrative. Whether it was Lincoln's rail-splitting or Barack Obama's Kenyan-Kansan unity, character, as reflected in biography, is the ultimate issue in selecting a president.

When people select a legislator, from city council to the Senate, they go through a checklist of issues, and ask, "Who will represent me on the issues I care about?" But when we choose an executive – especially president – we ask more fundamental, existential, self-definitional questions, like, "If my spouse and I both die, which candidate would we want to raise our children?"

This is especially important for a candidate with high negatives. Going into the 1992 Democratic convention, voters knew Bill Clinton had been accused of dodging the draft and cheating on his wife. They knew he'd gone to fancy schools like Georgetown and Yale and Oxford. So, many of them connected those dots and concluded Clinton was a wealthy, entitled, spoiled rich kid who didn't know or care about the struggles of the poor and middle class.

So we created "The Man From Hope." We could not erase the dots folks already had, but we added more: His mother was widowed before he was born; he was for a time raised by his grandparents, who ran one of the few general stores in Arkansas that served African-Americans as well as whites; he faced down his abusive, alcoholic stepfather when he threatened his mother; he went to college on a scholarship, and turned down lucrative jobs back East to return to Arkansas to make it a better place.

Trump's narrative arc is that he inherited a fortune, made even more, and married beautiful women while starring on a reality show. Perhaps he is satisfied with that, but voters want to know their president is one of them, that he, as President Clinton famously said, "Feels their pain."

As the Democrats prepare to gather in Philadelphia, here's a pro tip. The party that wins the White House is the one that is viewed as more unified and more mainstream. It's hard to be both at once.

You can unify around an extreme conservative or an extreme liberal, as the parties did under Barry Goldwater and George McGovern. And you can be in the mainstream, but if your party isn't unified you can be torpedoed by a fringe, as Al Gore was sunk by Ralph Nader.

Trump's divisive, dark and disastrous convention is an opening for Hillary Clinton and the Democrats. If they can come together, speak to the concerns of the forgotten middle class, campaign in search of, as Clinton has said, common ground instead of scorched earth, she will go a long way toward turning out the lights on Donald Trump's dark brand of politics.

#### Trump’s speech was great — he tells it like it is.

Blakeman 16 — Bradley A. Blakeman, Professor of Public Policy, Politics, and International Affairs at Georgetown University, former Senior Adviser to President George W. Bush, 2016 (“How did Trump do? GOP pundits weigh in on speech,” *The Hill*, July 22nd, Available Online at <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/presidential-campaign/288831-how-did-trump-do-gop-pundits-weigh-in-on-speech>, Accessed 07-22-2016)

Donald Trump — you're hired! His personal statement tonight made the case not only to the Republican convention, but also to the American people at large. Trump's remarks were as impressive as his resume. By the reaction of the convention attendees tonight, it is clear they liked what they heard. He tells it like it is: unfiltered and direct. And it was clearly not your typical acceptance speech delivered by a not-so-typical GOP nominee.

Trump lived up to tonight's theme, "Make America One Again," laying out by subject, one after the other, the problems we face, what needs to be done and how he will get it done — getting back to basics and vowing to unite the nation in his efforts will be his immediate challenges as president.

It starts with our own safety and security; only then can we achieve a healthy economy, fair trade, immigration reform, a strong military, care for veterans, tax reform, regulation reform, job creation, a robust manufacturing base, infrastructure development, energy independence, debt reduction, the repeal and replacement of ObamaCare, a strong foreign policy and a balanced Supreme Court, just to name a few of his objectives. In short, his message is simple: He fixes things and will put America first.

This has been the year of the outsider in both the Republican and Democratic primaries. The Republicans chose one, but the Democrats took a pass. There is no more outsider than Trump and no more insider than presumptive Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. The choices for the American people could not be starker.

Trump is the real deal and after tonight's performance, I have to believe that Democrats are shivering in their pantsuits about the next 100-plus days to come before Election Day.

America, your choice: great again or same again?

#### Trump’s speech was pretty good — a clear contrast is how to beat Clinton.

LeBoutillier 16 — John LeBoutillier, Co-Host of "Political Insiders" on Fox News Channel, former Member of the United States House of Representatives (R-NY), 2016 (“How did Trump do? GOP pundits weigh in on speech,” *The Hill*, July 22nd, Available Online at <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/presidential-campaign/288831-how-did-trump-do-gop-pundits-weigh-in-on-speech>, Accessed 07-22-2016)

Trump's speech began to frame the election in the right way: Our system is "rigged," and it thus takes an outsider to change it. This is the theme he needs to concentrate on from now until Nov. 8.

While veering off into crime too often during the speech, and thus taking the focus away from his strength on jobs and the economy, and for going on too, too long, Trump effectively laid out the differences between himself and Clinton.

If he keeps the focus on Clinton, he can win in November. But if he lets her make the election a referendum on his temperament, he will lose.

Tonight's speech is his guidepost for the road to November.

The question now is: Will he stick to it?

#### Trump’s speech was solid — he needs to maintain this style to beat Clinton.

Mackowiak 16 — Matt Mackowiak, syndicated columnist and Republican consultant, former Capitol Hill and George W. Bush administration aide, 2016 (“How did Trump do? GOP pundits weigh in on speech,” *The Hill*, July 22nd, Available Online at <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/presidential-campaign/288831-how-did-trump-do-gop-pundits-weigh-in-on-speech>, Accessed 07-22-2016)

Tonight, Trump effectively asked all Americans to answer one question: Do you feel safe? He believes the overwhelming answer is "no." Given the limitations of his candidacy, this was a well-developed and strongly delivered speech. At times it did appear too negative, but contrast is necessary in a nomination speech.

Trump made an address worthy of the presidency and I believe the result will be a small bump in the polls in the next week. My biggest concern is that he did not use this speech to expand his appeal, choosing instead to deepen it among the support he already has. His themes were entirely consistent with his campaign over the past year, but it was presented in the most thorough, disciplined and specific way yet. Trump smartly tapped in to the economic and security anxiety that many Americans feel, presenting himself as the only acceptable solution.

If Trump would present himself this seriously in campaign rallies, interviews and in the televised debates for the rest of the campaign, he would likely have a reasonable chance to win against a weak Democrat in a change year. He has now set a new standard. The question is: Can he keep it up?

#### Trump’s speech was good — he’s rightly appealing to Blue Collar voters in the Great Lakes region.

Manning 16 — Rick Manning, longtime conservative political professional who remains active in his local Republican Party, 2016 (“How did Trump do? GOP pundits weigh in on speech,” *The Hill*, July 22nd, Available Online at <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/presidential-campaign/288831-how-did-trump-do-gop-pundits-weigh-in-on-speech>, Accessed 07-22-2016)

Trump's personal, national and job security message hits to the heart of Americans who have seen their jobs threatened or lost, watched violence against the police seemingly accepted by our nation's leaders, and had their constitutional freedoms and beliefs come under nonstop attack over the past eight years, all the while terrorist attacks and beheadings seemingly are becoming the new normal.

Trump speaks directly to these voters, many of them blue collar, who have found that the Democratic Party that they once felt spoke for them has completely abandoned them. Tonight, Trump looked them in the eye and promised to be their voice, one that will tell the truth rather than subtle lies couched as political correctness. Trump promised to be a voice that will stand for them and against the corporate cronies who have fixed the system against them.

Rather than run a failed wash, rinse, repeat campaign, Trump's appeal to put America first in trade deals, restore law and order, enforce our borders, and protect our national security demonstrates that he is going to fight for traditional blue-collar, Democratic and independent voters in the Great Lakes states and beyond against an opponent saddled with a globalist record that is despised by these voters. The political brilliance of changing the electoral map from one where the GOP candidate had no margin for error to one where there are more battleground states in play automatically puts Clinton on the defensive in traditional Democratic strongholds like Pittsburgh, where it is Trump's rhetoric that is much more familiar and popular than Clinton's.

The fight for America has been joined, and the battleground will be blue-collar voters, a massive voting bloc that Clinton wishes would just go away.

#### Trump’s speech was terrible — “law-and-order” is a losing strategy and he’s destroyed the Republican Party.

Brooks 16 — David Brooks, Columnist at *The New York Times*, 2016 (“The Dark Knight,” *New York Times*, July 22nd, Available Online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/opinion/campaign-stops/the-dark-knight.html>, Accessed 07-22-2016)

Welcome to a world without rules. (I want you to read this paragraph in your super-scary movie trailer voice.) Welcome to a world in which families are mowed down by illegal immigrants, in which cops die in the streets, in which Muslims rampage the innocents and threaten our very way of life, in which the fear of violent death lurks in every human heart.

Sometimes in that blood-drenched world a dark knight arises. You don’t have to admire or like this knight. But you need this knight. He is your muscle and your voice in a dark, corrupt and malevolent world.

Such has been the argument of nearly every demagogue since the dawn of time. Aaron Burr claimed Spain threatened the U.S in 1806. A. Mitchell Palmer exaggerated the Red Scare in 1919 and Joe McCarthy did it in 1950.

And such was Donald Trump’s law-and-order argument in Cleveland on Thursday night. This was a compelling text that turned into more than an hour of humorless shouting. It was a dystopian message that found an audience and then pummeled them to exhaustion.

Will it work?

Well, this fear builds on the sense of loss that was the prevailing theme of this convention. We heard from a number of mothers who lost sons and siblings who lost brothers.

The argument takes the pervasive collection of anxieties that plague America and it concentrates them on the most visceral one: fear of violence and crime. Historically, this sort of elemental fear has proved to be contagious and it does move populations.

Finally, a law-and-order campaign calls upon the authoritarian personality traits that Donald Trump undoubtedly possesses. The G.O.P. used to be a party that aspired to a biblical ethic of private charity, graciousness, humility and faithfulness. Mitt Romney’s convention was lifted by stories of his kindness and personal mentorship.

Trump has replaced biblical commitments with a gladiator ethos. Everything is oriented around conquest, success, supremacy and domination. This was the Lock Her Up convention. A law-and-order campaign doesn’t ask voters to like Trump and the Republicans any more than they liked Richard Nixon in 1968.

On the other hand, there are good reasons to think that this law-and-order focus is a significant mistake, that it over-reads the current moment of Baton Rouge, Dallas and Nice and will not be the right focus for the fall.

In the first place, it’s based on a falsehood. Crime rates have been falling almost without fail for 25 years. Murder rates have been rising just recently among gangs in certain cities, but America is much safer than it was a decade ago. In the first half of 2015, for example, the number of shootings in New York and Washington hit historic lows.

Trump dwells on illegal aliens killing our children. Between 2010 and 2014, only 121 people released from immigration custody later committed murder; that’s about 25 a year. Every death is a horror, but the number of police officers killed each year as a result of a crime is about 55, in a nation of over 320 million people. The number of police deaths decreased by 24 percent between 2005 and 2015.

The main anxieties in this country are economic and social, not about crime. Trump surged to the nomination on the back of his supposed business acumen, not because he’s a sheriff. By focusing so much on law and order, he leaves a hole a mile wide for Hillary Clinton. She’ll undoubtedly fixate at the Democratic convention in Philadelphia on economic pain. Trump could end up seeming strangely detached.

But if Trump is detached from the country, and uninterested in anything but himself, he’s also detached from his party. Trump is not really changing his party as much as dissolving it.

A normal party has an apparatus of professionals, who have been around for a while and who can get things done. But those people might as well not exist. This was the most shambolically mis-run convention in memory.

A normal party is united by a consistent belief system. For decades, the Republican Party has stood for a forward-looking American-led international order abroad and small-government democratic capitalism at home.

Trump is decimating that, too, along with the things Republicans stood for: NATO, entitlement reform, compassionate conservatism and the relatively open movement of ideas, people and trade.

There’s no actual agenda being put in its place, just nostalgic spasms that, as David Frum has put it, are part George Wallace and part Henry Wallace. Trump’s policy agenda, such as it is, is mostly a series of vague and defensive recoils: build a wall, ban Muslims, withdraw from the world.

This is less a party than a personality cult. Law and order is a strange theme for a candidate who radiates conflict and disorder. Some rich children are careless that way; they break things and other people have to clean up the mess.